

# Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

October 7, 2010

The Honorable Barack Obama  
President  
The White House  
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.  
Washington, D.C.

Dear President Obama:

As we approach the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the establishment of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge on December 6, 2010, we ask that you grant the Arctic Refuge the strongest possible protections. In your commendable decision to declare September 2010 as National Wilderness Month, you recognized our nation's "diverse lands, remarkable wildlife, and untamed beauty." This proclamation is especially timely as we near the Arctic Refuge's 50th anniversary – a significant milestone in our nation's public lands legacy. The majestic Arctic Refuge is an American icon. Recent polling shows that two thirds of Americans support stronger protections for the Refuge. In this historic year, we ask that you grant the Arctic Refuge the strong protections it deserves.

The Arctic National Wildlife Refuge is truly one of America's greatest wild places. Its Coastal Plain hosts an amazing diversity of wildlife including polar bears, grizzly bears, muskoxen, wolverines, and over a hundred thousand caribou. This "biological heart" of the Refuge is connected to the entire country, as well as to countries all around the world. Every year, birds that begin their lives on the Coastal Plain migrate to all 50 states and across six continents, before heading back to the Arctic, where the cycle of life begins again.

The people of the Gwich'in Nation call this area "the Sacred Place where life begins" because it is vital to their subsistence lifestyle. They, together with other Alaska Native tribes and Canadian First Nation people, depend on the caribou for food and as a link to their traditional way of life. Many Inupiat people across the North Slope have voiced opposition to oil drilling in the Refuge because they are increasingly feeling the cumulative effects of oil and gas development in the North Slope of Alaska on their subsistence resources and way of life.

On December 6, 1960, during the Eisenhower administration, Interior Secretary Fred Seaton signed the public land order establishing the 8.9-million-acre Arctic National Wildlife Range. In a visionary public statement, Secretary Seaton said "Looking ahead 50 years to the unfolding story of Alaska's development, it is clear that the only economically feasible opportunity for maintaining a wilderness frontier large enough for the preservation of the caribou, the grizzly, the Dall sheep, the wolverine, and the polar bear, all of which require a sizeable unrestricted range, lies in this northeastern Arctic region of the State." Since that time, over 100 million Arctic acres outside of the Refuge

— almost the entirety of Alaska's North Slope — have been slated for oil and gas development. Now is the time to find balance in managing our public lands.

Again, we thank you for your efforts to honor the American legacy of preserving our wild public lands for future generations. As you continue important efforts across the country through the America's Great Outdoors Initiative, we urge you to also take steps to provide additional protections to the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge. On the historic 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the creation of the Arctic Refuge, now is the time to grant the Refuge the strong, long-term protections it deserves so that we can pass this unspoiled American treasure to our children and grandchildren.

Sincerely,



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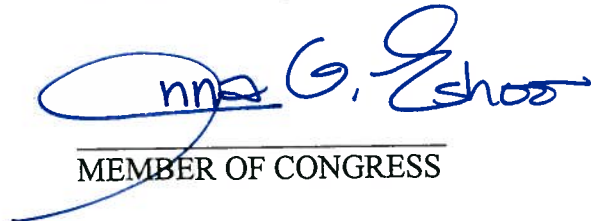
  
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